

## Introduction

---

A review of the State of Oregon child and family services programs was completed pursuant to section 1123A of the Social Security Act and 45 CFR 1355.31 through 1355.37. These sections charge the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) with the review of such programs. The purpose of the reviews is to determine substantial conformity with State plan requirements and other program requirements under titles IV-B and IV-E of the Act.

The reviews cover the range of child and family services funded through titles IV-B and IV-E, including child protective services, foster care, adoption, independent living, and family support and preservation services. The review process evaluates seven specific safety, permanency and well-being outcomes of services delivered to children and families. In addition to reviewing for case outcomes, the review process also examines seven systemic factors that affect the State's capacity to deliver services in a manner that promotes positive outcomes for children and families.

The review process features two major phases. The first phase consists of the development of a State Profile, derived from data for FFY 1999 contained in the Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS) and for CY 1999 from the National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System (NCANDS). This data profile provides information on the key indicators relating to safety and permanency for children entering the child welfare system. States develop their Statewide Assessment using this data and other sources of information. The assessment analyzes the process, procedures and policies of the State's child protective services, and foster care and adoption programs. This assessment also focuses on the systemic factors that are in place, which enable the State to carry out the process, procedures and policies of the program.

The second phase is the Onsite Review that includes intensive reviews of a sample of cases and interviews with state and local stakeholders in the provider and service delivery community. Information from both phases of the review is used to determine the State's substantial conformity with the requirements under review.

In reviewing for outcomes and systemic factors, the review process is designed to identify both the strengths and areas needing improvement in the State's programs. For those areas in which the State is determined not to be operating in substantial conformity with the requirements under review, the State has the opportunity to implement a Program Improvement Plan (PIP) designed to correct the areas of nonconformity. According to 45 CFR 1355.34(b)(3) for the first state CFS review, each outcome must be substantially achieved in 90 percent of the cases examined during the Onsite Review in order to be determined in substantial conformity. Although the State is advised of applicable penalties associated with the degree of nonconformity, the

penalties are not assessed until the State has had an opportunity to correct the area of nonconformity through the Program Improvement Plan.

The period under review for the Child and Family Service Onsite Review in Oregon was from April 1, 2000 to June 8, 2001. The review process consisted of the following activities:

- The State completed the Statewide Assessment in April 2001 in consultation with the ACF Regional Office.
- The State and the ACF Regional Office selected three locations in the State for the Onsite Review: Lincoln, Multnomah, and Umatilla counties. The Onsite Review was conducted during the week of June 4-8, 2001.
- A State and Federal review team of 51 persons reviewed a total of 50 cases. Review teams at each site consisted of a site leader from the Federal staff, a co-site leader from the State staff, and two-person State/Federal case review teams. These teams reviewed and rated the services provided these children and families in relationship to safety, permanency and well-being. This was done by conducting a review of the case records, and interviewing those involved with the case such as parents, caseworkers, foster parents, service providers, and when appropriate, the children themselves.
- The teams also conducted interviews and focus groups with approximately 130 State and local stakeholders, including foster parents, managers, caseworkers and supervisors, citizen review boards, judges, and other community partners.

The results of the Statewide Assessment, the Onsite Case Review and the Stakeholder Interviews were compiled and used to make a determination about the State's substantial conformity with regard to each of the seven outcomes and each of the seven systemic factors.

This report summarizes the information obtained from the review pertaining to each outcome and systemic factor, and the performance indicators used to evaluate them. The ACF Regional Office will be working with Oregon Services to Children and Families (SCF) to develop a Program Improvement Plan that addresses those areas not in substantial conformity.

## **Key Findings for Systemic Factors**

---

Each of the seven systemic factors was rated on a scale from "1" to "4" on the basis of review information on state performance on multiple state plan and program requirements associated with that particular systemic factor. If all the requirements for a systemic factor were met, the systemic factor was rated a "4". If all except one requirement was met, the systemic factor was rated a "3". A rating of "3" or "4" resulted in a determination that the State was in substantial conformity on that factor.

If some of the requirements for a systemic factor were in place but more than one (or, in the case of the information system systemic factor, one) were rated as an area needing improvement, the systemic factor was rated a "2" and resulted in a determination that the State was not in substantial conformity on that factor.

### **1. Statewide Information System**

***This Systemic Factor was rated "3" and is in substantial conformity.***

Oregon has a sophisticated data system (FACIS) which can readily identify the status, demographic characteristics, location, and goals for the placement of children in foster care. The system is able to provide helpful case information to caseworkers and supervisors and is beginning to be used to provide outcome-based reports to the community and SCF managers. FACIS could be better utilized to provide managers and supervisors with sufficient reports on field practice. Currently use is limited by significant data accuracy, completeness and consistency problems and the lack of a culture that values data and uses the system.

### **2. Case Review System**

***This Systemic Factor was rated "2" and is not in substantial conformity.***

In many cases the use of Family Decision Meetings (FDMs) and strength/needs-based planning engaged families in the case planning process and resulted in individualized plans. However, some cases did not have current plans and/or did not have meaningful plans. This was particularly true in cases in which System of Care/FDM practices were not used and in cases of children in longterm foster care or residential treatment. As a result, case planning was identified as an area needing improvement.

Timely periodic reviews held by the Citizen Review Board (CRB) were rated an area of strength. Both internal and external stakeholders were familiar with ASFA timeframes and noted that court hearings were resulting in more movement towards permanency. At the same time, they noted a lack of clarity and purpose in the conduct of

permanency hearings and expressed serious concerns about some permanency decisions made. Permanency hearings were rated an area needing improvement.

A process is in place and utilized for meeting the ASFA TPR requirements. This item was rated a strength.

Foster parents are receiving regular notice of their opportunity to be heard in reviews and hearings. A significant number are attending and are being heard. This item was rated a strength.

### **3. Quality Assurance**

***This Systemic Factor was rated "4" and is in substantial conformity.***

SCF has a formal quality assurance process used to regularly review each branch. This process is inclusive and results in comprehensive findings used for program improvement. Stakeholders expressed serious concern that this process might be discontinued in the new biennium. Continued attention must be given to ensure that the State has a consistent outcomes-based quality assurance process.

### **4. Training**

***This Systemic Factor was rated a "2" and is not in substantial conformity.***

SCF has a strong program to provide training through the Portland State Child Welfare Partnership and has good core training. However, most staff are not receiving the initial in-service training prior to carrying cases, and many staff do not participate in ongoing training. Consequently, these items were rated as an area needing improvement.

Foster parent training was rated as a strength. Most foster parents felt their training met their needs. Foster parents did note a need for childcare to participate in training and suggested computer based training that could be completed at home.

### **5. Service Array**

***This Systemic Factor was rated a "3" and is in substantial conformity.***

A wide array of services is available for families and children in Oregon. Safety nets provide early preventive services and SCF provides formal and informal services to families served by SCF. However, the review team noted service needs of several

types. Services to teens are lacking, residential treatment resources were in short supply, and the independent living program needed improvement. Stakeholders also noted a lack of foster homes and therapeutic foster homes in two of the sites reviewed. This was rated as an area needing improvement.

Service accessibility and individualization of services, however, were noted strengths. While service provision is challenging in rural areas, System of Care flexible funds and Title IV-E waiver funds are used to meet individual needs.

## **6. Agency Responsiveness to the Community**

***This Systemic Factor was rated "4" and is in substantial conformity.***

Stakeholders indicated SCF Central Administration is responsive and that SCF shares information with community partners and actively seeks input. Tribal stakeholders noted positive examples of agency responsiveness to their concerns.

## **7. Foster and Adoptive Parent Licensing, Recruitment and Retention**

***This Systemic Factor was rated "4" and is in substantial conformity.***

SCF has implemented new certification standards emphasizing health and safety. These standards are applied to all homes caring for children. SCF obtains criminal background checks as required by federal law.

SCF diligently recruits foster and adoptive parents that reflect the ethnic and racial diversity of children in SCF care. SCF in one site has a successful practice recruiting through churches and in another site is developing a neighborhood based foster care program.

SCF utilizes strategies to maximize access to cross-jurisdictional resources and is recognized as a leader in making out-of-state placements.

## **Key Findings for Safety, Permanency and Well-being Outcomes**

---

In order for a state to be determined to be in substantial conformity on any given outcome, the outcome must be substantially achieved in 90% of the cases reviewed in the State's first CFSR. In addition, the State must meet the national standard for the statewide aggregate data indicators related to that particular outcome.

### **I. SAFETY OUTCOMES**

#### **1. Children are, first and foremost, protected from abuse and neglect.**

***This Outcome is not in substantial conformity.***

- 86% of the cases reviewed substantially achieved Safety Outcome 1.
- The statewide data indicator for repeat maltreatment is at 6.81% and does not meet the national standard of 6.1%
- The statewide data indicator for maltreatment of children in foster care is at .796% and does not meet the national standard of .57%

Emergent high-risk reports of abuse and neglect were responded to promptly and investigated within agency requirements. Staff demonstrated persistent and effective efforts to contact families. Overall, in two thirds of the cases in which reports were received during the review period, investigations met the required state timeframes. In the remaining one third of the applicable cases reviewed, caseworkers did not have face to face contact within required timeframes due to delays in assignment or worker response.

Stakeholders and reviewers noted concerns about consistency related to screening decisions, response time designations, application of threat of harm, and investigative/assessment disposition.

In terms of the repeat maltreatment measure, both the State data indicator and cases reviewed demonstrated that State performance is close to meeting the national standard.

#### **2. Children are safely maintained in their homes whenever possible and appropriate.**

***This Outcome is not in substantial conformity.***

- 80.4% of the applicable cases reviewed substantially achieved Safety Outcome II.

Services to families in-home are both a focus and strength in SCF. Family Support Teams typically produced exceptional case assessment, management and service delivery. Family Decision Meetings were for the most part associated with comprehensive and risk-related/strength-based case plans and services. Cases reflected a broad array of agency and community based services. Local office discretionary funding and special projects provide strength based and family focused resources. However, available family focused resources and services were not consistently applied to all cases.

In some cases, services were not matched to risk, and re-assessment of risk factors was absent at critical decision-making junctures such as reunification or case closure. Stakeholders expressed concern regarding services and monitoring available post-reunification and inappropriate delegation of some aspects of child safety to community partners.

## **II. PERMANENCY OUTCOMES**

### **1. Children have permanency and stability in their living situations.**

***This Outcome is not in substantial conformity.***

- 85.7% of the applicable cases reviewed substantially achieved Permanency Outcome I.
- The statewide indicator for foster care re-entries is at 20.41% and does not meet the national standard of 8.6%.
- The statewide indicator for length of time to achieve reunification is at 79.06% and meets the national standard of 76.2%.
- The statewide indicator for length of time to achieve adoption is at 24.22% and does not meet the national standard of 32%.
- The statewide indicator for stability of foster care placements is at 83.65% and does not meet the national standard of 86.7%.

Foster care re-entry rates raised data discrepancy issues that the State elected not to resolve prior to completing this report. Although the State data profile reported a 20.41% re-entry rate, there were no re-entry cases identified during the review period. Data integrity and/or MIS/SACWIS program logic will require exploration to determine possible explanations of the discrepancy. This will be a PIP expectation.

Stability of foster care placements was a noted strength. Relative resources, neighborhood foster care projects and support to foster parents contributed to this result which is close to meeting the national standard.



Relative and foster-adopt placements are substantial resources for adoption and often enabled preservation of family and community connections. Stakeholders observe that establishment and implementation of permanency plans is moving much more rapidly, and attribute this to the State's implementation of the Adoption and Safe Families Act (ASFA). However, crowded court calendars delays in setting termination trials and court continuances were concerns expressed across the three sites.

Oregon continues to face challenges in achieving timely appropriate permanency plans. Concurrent planning tends to be a sequential rather than parallel process. Stakeholders attributed some delays to a lack of Attorney General involvement prior to termination of parental rights (TPR) resulting in technical oversights and legal insufficiency. Stakeholders and the review team also noted a lack of urgency post-TPR to complete the adoptive process.

A significant number of children have permanency plans other than reunification or adoption. Some children with serious behavioral/mental health problems were considered unadoptable and subsequently efforts were not made to identify adoption resources.

The perceived or real disparity between foster care maintenance reimbursement and adoption subsidy was cited as another cause for delay and sometimes resulted in an alternate permanent plan of longterm foster care being established in lieu of adoption.

## **2. The continuity of family relationships and connections is preserved for children.**

### ***This Outcome is in substantial conformity.***

- 94.3% of the applicable cases reviewed substantially achieved Permanency Outcome II.

Proximity of foster care placements to the child's family was a substantial and consistent strength. Placement and visits with siblings, visits between parents and their children and preserving connections were also strengths. Family decision meetings and System of Care resources supported positive outcomes as did major initiatives such as Family to Family and Neighborhood Foster Care. In relevant cases, there was good practice and effort related to working with tribes and meeting Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) requirements.

Both SCF staff and foster parents focus on and contribute to maintaining the parent-child relationship. Relatives and extended family often play a role as well. Open adoptions that often have utilized mediation in the process further support this practice.

### **III. CHILD AND FAMILY WELL-BEING OUTCOMES**

#### **1. Families Have Enhanced Capacity To Provide For Their Children's Needs.**

***This Outcome is not in substantial conformity.***

- 76% of the cases reviewed substantially achieved Well-being Outcome 1.

Oregon uses strengths/needs based practice, family decision meetings, and flexible funds successfully to meet the needs of children and their families. However, Oregon continues to face challenges in serving families that are not motivated to engage in services and in serving older youth. Meeting the needs of children and families was identified as an area needing improvement.

Including families in case planning is standard practice in Oregon. In almost all cases families and children (where appropriate) were involved in case planning.

Oregon has made frequent contact with children and families a priority in a new policy effective January 15, 2001. As a result foster parents and some families noted positively a marked increase in the numbers of worker/child visits in the last few months. However, over one third of the applicable cases did not have sufficient visits between workers and children and one fourth did not have adequate visits between workers and parents. Consequently, visitation between the agency and child/parent was identified as an area needing improvement.

#### **2. Children Receive Appropriate Services To Meet Their Educational Needs.**

***This Outcome is not in substantial conformity.***

- 82.1% of the cases reviewed substantially achieved Well-being Outcome 2.

While foster parents and some social workers successfully advocated to obtain services to ensure children's educational needs were met, some children's educational needs were not met. SCF needs to more consistently address identified educational needs either by follow-up, referral, advocacy or services.

#### **3. Children Receive Adequate Services To Meet Their Physical and Mental Health Needs.**

***This Outcome is not in substantial conformity.***

- 83% of the cases reviewed substantially achieved Well-being Outcome 3.

In most of the cases reviewed children had health care screenings and assessments and their physical health needs were met. Access in some cases was difficult, especially for dental care, but foster parents persisted in securing the needed services.

Most cases had mental health screenings and mental health assessments. However, this item was rated as needing improvement because some of the children for whom treatment needs were identified did not receive the services they needed.